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ABSTRACT

The relationship between social science researchers and practitioners in various sectoral bodies is being investigated in Sweden to increase understanding of "knowledge development." In addition to this general analysis, a subproject focuses on the knowledge development resulting from the interaction between consumer research and consumer policy. The investigation will analyze political and historical developments, activities and working conditions of the consumer policy bodies, and the concrete processes of knowledge production. Two other subprojects will focus on the relationship between research and practice in the areas of working-life policy and higher education policy. The general analysis of knowledge development will include a literature review of research policy and the theory of science and conceptual frameworks concerning "research about research." Literature reviews and interviewing of researchers and practitioners will be undertaken in the subprojects. One or more processes concerning researcher--practitioner relations in the development of knowledge will be studied in-depth. Working papers and references for each area of the project are listed. (SW)

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TITLE OF PROJECT: Practitioners and social scientists - planning and utilization of social science

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GENERAL BACKGROUND

This project is a continuation of a previous study of the relations of social scientists with practitioners and practice in the course of their research. This time the perspective has been inverted, so that the research relationship is being viewed from the practitioners' angle. A number of general analyses have been made of relations of this kind, often in terms of organization theory. Our intention is to carry out a more penetrating analysis of the relationship between practitioners and researchers (social scientists) in sectoral research processes in a number of fields, so as to shed more light on problems which have attracted growing interest as a result of the comprehensive survey reports published by the Research Councils Commission and the discussion to which those reports have given rise. At present our knowledge concerning the conditions of external, extra-scientific influence on intra-scientific cognitive development (=knowledge development) and vice versa, i.e. the effect and influence of science on sectoral practice, is far too shallow.

PURPOSE

In this project we shall study the relationship and the interaction between researchers in the social sciences and practitioners in various sectoral bodies as a part of the development of sectoral knowledge. In this way we hope to be able to analyse the following points, among others:

- the way in which the sectors studied relate to one another in terms of organization, more particularly organization of the development of knowledge, and the way in which they relate to the more schematic models of "sector" and "sectoral research" which have been put forward and discussed in the debate on research policy and investigatory activities in Sweden during the 1970s,

- within the sectoral framework, the way in which problems concerning the initiation and control of knowledge development and involving researchers are seen from the vantage point of practitioners at different levels, the relationship between this perspective and schematic arguments about "liberty" and "control" in research contexts, and the interrelationship in this respect of the sectors studied,

- the extent to which the development of knowledge within the areas studied can be said to be common to the practitioners and researchers involved and/or of both practical and disciplinary or interdisciplinary relevance, similarities or dissimilarities in this respect between the sectors studied and possible explanations for these relationships.

STRATEGY

The project began on 1st July 1977 and comprises four sub-projects, viz a general analysis of the relationship between practitioners and researchers in sectoral knowledge development (sub-project I), and studies of these relationships in three specific sectors, namely consumer policy (sub-project II), working-life policy (sub-project III) and higher education policy (sub-project IV). Sub-project I will continue for the duration of the project and will furnish the framework within which the results of the other sub-projects are summarized and compared. The sub-projects will be of shorter duration but will partly overlap in time. Sub-project I includes studies of literature on the theory of science and on research policy, together with the development and consolidation of a supplementary conceptual apparatus and discussion with other researchers engaged in "research about research" etc. Various working papers are being prepared in this project and distributed for discussion among the researchers concerned and also to several practitioners. Studies of documentation and literature are being undertaken in sub-projects II-IV so as to furnish each

of them with a general picture of the origins and growth of the sector and the subsequent development of the sectoral bodies, together with developments of certain research fields of importance in the sectoral context. Against this background a study will then be made of the organization and evolution of knowledge development in the sector, partly with the aid of documentary and data studies and also by interviewing practitioners and researchers. One or more development patterns or processes will then be selected in each sub-project for an in-depth study of researcher-practitioner relations in the development of knowledge.

SUB-PROJECT I

Sub-project I has been given the working name PRACTITIONERS AND SOCIAL SCIENTISTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE. Work within this sub-project has focussed on an analysis of more generalized texts concerning the role of research in the development of applied knowledge. The many important contributions made in this field in 1977/78 have included the reports of the Research Council Commission and the Research Training Commission, the OECD report entitled "The Utilisation of the Social Sciences in Policy Making" and Peter Stevrin's study "Socially Steered Research". We have taken part in the discussion of these studies, partly in the course of our participation in a series of colloquies on the subject of "Scientific Development, Research Organization and Research Careers" organized by the Department of the Theory of Science at the University of Gothenburg and the Research Policy Programme of the University of Lund, but also at special seminars in which Peter Stevrin has been among the participants. Our analyses have focussed on a number of central concepts in the discussion of research policy, such as the meaning of "steered" or "controlled" research, differences and lines of demarcation between research and other cognitive development, researcher and practitioner roles of different kinds, various forms of dependence between researchers and practitioners in the development of knowledge, the occurrence of similarities, mutuality or reciprocity between practitioners and researchers from the viewpoint of cognitive development, impediments of various kinds to the mobilization of research on both the research and practitioner sides etc. In these connections we will be paying special attention to the occurrence of differences between types of knowledge and between types of knowledge development, and we are critical of excessively schematic arguments concerning purposive and social control in discussions of research policy. Historical circumstances and conflicts between different groups have to be taken into account when dealing with cognitive development. Arguments concerning the intradisciplinary and extradisciplinary rele-

levance of cognitive development will be analysed and deepened with the aid of the paired concepts practice relevance - disciplinary relevance and practitioner relevance - researcher relevance. The concepts of research relevance and research significance, which provide a meeting point for these various aspects of the significance of sectoral research, also include the question as to how problems become researchable and/or research-worthy.

So far the project has yielded three working papers (see below), no. 3 of which will be presented at an international conference this summer.

Current references:

Research Council Commission: "Research Policy" (with appendices), SOU 1977:52-55. (In Swedish).

Research Training Commission: "Subsequent Higher Education", SOU 1977:63. (In Swedish).

Stevrin, Peter: "Socially Steered Research", Liber, Stockholm 1978. (In Swedish).

Sandberg, Åke: "The Limits to Democratic Planning", Liber, Stockholm 1976.

Mendelsohn, E. et al. (eds): "The Social Production of Scientific Knowledge", Reidel, Dordrecht, 1977.

Cherns, A.B. et al. (eds): "Social Science and Government: Policies & Problems", Tavistock, London 1972.

Crawford, E. & Perry, N.: "Demands for Social Knowledge", SAGE, Guildford 1977.

Demerath, N.J. et al. (eds): "Social Policy and Sociology", Academic Press, New York 1975.

Working papers:

Dahlström, E.: "Practitioners, Social Scientists and Planning", stencil, Department of Sociology, University of Gothenburg, 1978. (In Swedish).

Johansson, E.: "Practitioners and Social Scientists in the Development of Knowledge", stencil, Department of Sociology, University of Gothenburg 1978. (In Swedish).

Dahlström, E.: "Interaction between Practitioners and Social Scientists in Research and Development", stencil, National Board of Universities and Colleges, 1978.

SUB-PROJECT II

Sub-project II carries the main heading CONSUMER RESEARCH AND CONSUMER POLICY and is intended to shed light on the knowledge development resulting from interaction between these categories. This is a many-sided task for which it is not easy to find an adequate subheading. However, certain

aspects of the project can be taken as possible sub-headings. At a general level the project is concerned with a study of knowledge production and practitioner-researcher relations in the consumer policy sector. By putting this into a historical perspective we will also make it, to a certain extent, a study of the role of knowledge development questions in the development of the consumer policy sector, which, viewed in a shorter chronological perspective, also implies a study of the conditions of sectoral research in the field of consumer policy. The politically established frames of consumer policy are an overriding component of these conditions, and the project is therefore to be seen very much in terms of a study of practitioner-researcher relations in the production of knowledge concerning the conditions of private consumption. This is a consequence of the influence of the practitioner side on the direction of sectoral knowledge production. Since we shall also be considering the influence of researchers on the production of knowledge, the study will to some extent also be a study of the scope available for consumer research disciplines in the production of knowledge relating to consumer policy.

The work of the project will involve four levels of analysis. Developments at political level have an important bearing not only on the growth and development of consumer policy but also on the working conditions today applying to the knowledge-producing activities of the consumer policy authorities. Special interest will therefore be devoted in the course of this project to the way in which consumer policy has appeared in the parliamentary context and at ministerial level during the 1970s. The appearance of consumer policy and consumer research in Government inquiries, on the other hand, is primarily referable to the historical retrospect of the emergence and development of consumer policy. However, the two most important levels in the project are the activities and working conditions of the consumer policy bodies and concrete processes of knowledge production. Where consumer policy bodies are concerned, the chronological perspective is limited to the period from 1971 onwards, i.e. the bodies considered will be the Consumer Ombudsman (KO) and the National Board for Consumer Policies (KOV), which were amalgamated in 1976. Earlier consumer policy bodies are dealt with in the historical retrospect, and consideration is also given to various effects of their incorporation by KOV. Concrete knowledge production processes involving practitioners in the consumer policy bodies in interaction with consumer researchers from various disciplines are being studied on the basis of research projects financed by KOV. These projects, accordingly, are to a greater or lesser extent regarded as common "meeting points" between the sectorally based knowledge interest of practitioners and the disciplinarily based research interest of researchers.

A general analysis of the emergence and content of consumer policy is being undertaken within the framework of the project. The early 1940s have been taken as the starting point here, but the main emphasis will be on the years from the late 1960s onwards. A similar analysis will also be made of consumer research. A more detailed analysis is being made of the knowledge production financed by KOV/KO and carried out by researchers from various disciplines. This analysis includes the activities financed out of the KOV/KO research allocation and certain features of the project activities financed out of the same authority's current budget. In this connection we will also see how the efforts of various external interest groupings to influence consumer policy are manifested at this level. Both business interests and consumer interests are represented in the KOV/KO Directorate and are thus given a certain insight into the authority's knowledge production and possibly to the opportunity of exerting a certain measure of influence. On both sides, moreover, there is organized interest in questions of consumer policy and consumer research; these interests are represented, for example, by the consumer policy group set up by the Industrial Council for Social and Economic Studies (SNS) and, secondly, the Co-operative Institute. An interesting question requiring consideration in this connection concerns the definition of "the consumer interest" and the identity of its carriers. Insofar as an organization like SNS initiates and/or finances consumer research or consumer policy research which is based on a critical attitude towards consumer policy activities, that research can be regarded as counter-research in relation to the consumer policy bodies. Similar arguments can be propounded, for example, concerning the Co-operative Institute, but the situation here is rendered less clear by the elusive nature of the consumer interest; the co-operative movement represents consumers, trade union organizations represent consumers, the environmental movement represents consumers and so on. Individual researchers too can sometimes regard themselves as carriers of consumer interests, and insofar as these interests deviate from the consumer interests manifested on the part of KOV/KO, one is perhaps entitled to speak in terms of counter-research. Critical research on the other hand refers to knowledge-producing activities which represent a querying of "truths of consumer policy" or "truths of consumer research" but which do not have the same type of connection with a vested interest.

By analysing the emergence and development of consumer policy and by analysing the way in which knowledge production by the consumer policy bodies is organized and conducted, the project will cover research in the field of consumer policy, i.e. the way in which it is initiated, conducted and directed and the extent to which it is institutionalized. To some extent we will also arrive at its effects on the consumer policy bodies and on the institutions where it takes place. By studying the organization and conduct of knowledge pro-

duction and by studying concrete knowledge production processes, the project will also to some extent ascertain the way in which problem generation and knowledge interests on the part of both practitioners and researchers influence and interact within the concrete process and how such "internal" factors and the above mentioned "outward" factors can be preconditions and restrictions in relation to each other. By means of various documentation and literature studies, and by analysing economic and other data from the consumer policy bodies, the project will arrive at a general picture of (the way in which) the "outward" side of the knowledge production in which practitioners from the consumer policy bodies and researchers from various social sciences meet one another. General fieldwork in the form of interviews of different consumer policy interests and persons who have been involved in the development of consumer policy and the development of consumer research will serve to give this picture a qualitative element constituting the first step towards bridging the gap between the outward and inward sides. Fieldwork focussing on the consumer policy bodies and taking the form of interviews of practitioners at different levels within KOV/KO will supply the project with knowledge and insight concerning the way in which the practical work of consumer policy and its organization serves in various ways to create opportunities, facilities and conditions for purely internal knowledge production and for knowledge production involving external researchers. Fieldwork focussing on concrete research projects and taking the form of interviews of individual researchers and of the persons at KOV/KO who have been involved in the handling of those projects will enable us to see what the "inward" side looks like, primarily from the viewpoint of the researchers but also from the viewpoint of the practitioners; this will be the last step in bridging the gap between the outward and inward sides.

The case studies which are being undertaken refer to previously completed research processes. At this level the project may be succeeded by a follow-up study in connection with the introduction of KOV's new programme of research policy later during 1978. This follow-up work should comprise a study - from the initiation stage if possible - of the behaviour of the practitioner and researcher sides in a new project within the framework of the new programme. The main body of work, however, will be concluded during the spring or summer of 1978, and a report is expected to appear during the autumn of 1978.

SUB-PROJECT III

Sub-project III carries the heading WORKING-LIFE POLICY AND WORKING-LIFE RESEARCH. A survey of the content and function of occupational research during the post-war period has already been compiled and distributed to a number of practitioners and researchers with a request for supplementary material and comments. This section of the inquiry is partly based on Edmund Dahlström's participation in central research planning activities. Material for it has been obtained from the Working-Life Centre, from work on the wider programme for the Swedish Work Environment Fund, and from the current research follow-up of the recent reforms of labour legislation. A number of interviews of practitioners concerning occupational research are being conducted during the spring of 1978, and a revised paper completed. Most of the field-work will be done during the autumn of 1978.

Research in the occupational sector is distinguished by the absence of powerful and inter-sectoral state authorities, by the existence of powerful interest organizations and opposition between them, and by efforts to achieve more action-oriented research. In this sub-study there will be cause for a special analysis of the question of the local or central footing of research and local or central organization, and also of the question of partial or impartial research.

Working papers:

Dahlström, E.: "Working-Life Policy and Working-Life Research", stencil, Department of Sociology, University of Gothenburg 1977. (In Swedish). Revised version 1978.

An essay produced for international conferences will be appearing this summer, namely

Dahlström, E.: "The Role of Social Science in Working-Life Policy: The Case of Post-War Sweden", essay presented at the Stockholm University Jubilee Conference 1978 and the ISA World Congress 1978.

SUB-PROJECT IV

HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY. The study in this field benefits from the part played by Edmund Dahlström in research planning contexts and also by the fact that both of us rank as practitioners in certain respects. University reform activities have raised the question of special knowledge production. Within the UHÄ sector a discussion characterized by manifold awareness is in progress concerning the organization of research both within the sector and outside it. UHÄ (i.e. the Office of Universities and Colleges) has a double research problem. One aspect of this problem concerns the Office's internal R&D activities and the elucidation of the internal and external problems of higher education. The other aspect concerns the UHÄ system as a basis

for research generally and the problems of research policy which appear in this connection. Interesting questions in the UHÄ field include, for example, the relation of research to local and central knowledge production, the research implications of local development work, the integration of knowledge at different levels, problems surrounding the reform follow-up and the role of research in this connection, and difficulties in guiding and utilizing research. An initial outline of this sub-project will be found in section 3 of the essay "Interaction between Practitioners and Social Scientists in Research and Development", which has been produced as part of sub-project I. Work on sub-project IV will start in 1978/79.

TIMETABLE

Sub-project II will be concluded during the fiscal year 1977/78. The principal phase of sub-project III will be conducted during the autumn of 1978, though theoretical analyses and a certain amount of fieldwork are being carried out during the spring of 1978. Sub-project IV will start in the autumn of 1978 and conclude in the spring of 1979. The results of the various sub-projects will be summarized and compared in connection with the conclusion of sub-project I in the spring/summer of 1979.